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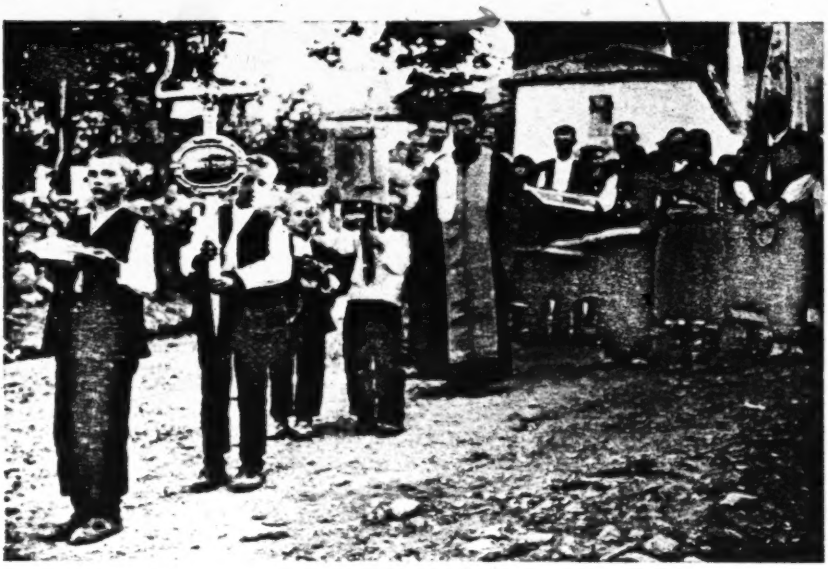

"The procession . . . was led by a boy carrying . . . boiled wheat to be placed on the grave." *See page 38.*

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"Many times we carry clothes to the river . . . where we pound them with the *buhalka*." *See page 39.*

[Facing p. 33]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

Thus the house became a home. Birth and death took their turn, so that every square foot of the small dwelling held its special memories. Over in that corner Ivanche was born; that stool by the bed was the one great-grandmother sat on many hours each day until her death at 102 years of age. She was the one who told the children the fascinating stories about dragons, who were "human beings like the rest of us but had wings in their armpits." She always enjoyed telling the legend about the lazy woman back in the days when people did not have to bring wood home from the forest in a wagon but simply tied the wood together in a bundle, whipped it, and sent it home by itself. It seems that the lazy woman was not content with this simple expedient, but after tying the pieces of wood together sat on top the bundle in the hope it would carry her home. God became so angry at this presumption that He forbade the wood to go home any longer under its own power. Henceforth it had to be taken home in a wagon.

Not far from the iconostas was a faded photograph, the only one in the room, of Peter and his bride Tsveta. Peter was the oldest son, and soon after his marriage in 1917 left for the army, never to return from the battlefield. Tsveta of course was married again, three months after his death, to a man from Bistritsa who needed an efficient housekeeper.

But not all of the life at the homestead took place indoors. The walled-in yard was also the scene of many family experiences. In fact, so many of the household processes went on outside in warm weather that the grass was completely worn away. I once asked a woman doing her washing out in the yard where she preferred to do that job. She replied:

"Clothes are washed with soap and hot water, and since we do not have special places for washing we do it in the living room in bad weather, or in the yard in good weather. Many times we carry the clothes to the river, but even there we heat water for rinsing. We pound the clothes with the *buhalka* [heavy wooden paddle] and wash not only our underclothes, but our outer garments as well, with the exception of the leather *kozhusi* [jackets]." She also volunteered in-

formation as to wash days: "We wash twice a week: on Monday and Wednesday, or on Wednesday and Saturday."

Many of the yards still had the threshing floor, reminiscent of Old Testament days. This could be located by a forlorn post which seemed to be serving no useful purpose. In the fall great quantities of drying wool hung from the clotheslines; and a little later the family piled in the yard the winter supply of wood from the forest.

The eaves of the house, deep as they were, sheltered such things as strings of drying peppers and ears of corn; milk utensils hung beneath them practically the year round; even the scythes and wooden hayforks found frequent lodging there. Storks nested in the trees and chimneys. With the coming of the warmer weather the sheep left their folds in the yards for the pastures, and the shepherd took with him his wattled shelter, which he moved on sleds across the grassy meadows.

In many yards a heavy, large-wheeled wagon stood near the primitive sheds for the animals and the ever-present strawstack. If the peasants were unusually superstitious, there would be dabs of blue paint on the wagon to keep the Evil Eye away. When the weather was nice there were usually children at play in the yard. Upon seeing a visitor they added their lusty shouts to the ominous barking of the dogs. They chased the dogs away from the gate by throwing sticks and stones at them, and at the same time warned the visitor to be on the alert. Far too often the dogs sneaked up behind to nip an ankle of the unsuspecting visitor.

The yards had few flowers, because chickens of a nondescript variety pecked freely throughout the premises. One or two scraggly trees, from which the children shook most of the fruit before it had time to ripen, stood in a corner wistfully seeking to give a touch of beauty to the scene. In the spring the blossoms of such trees made the village bright, but when the fruit and leaves were gone the bare, black skeletons of the trees fitted in only too well with the poverty and sternness of village life. Poor land, inefficiently tilled, contributed to this poverty. Although the peasants worked hard in their fields, they had little cash on hand after selling their crops and paying their debts. Home improvements were postponed from year to year, but the hard work kept on just the same.